



January 28, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Church which "goes forth" is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn4:19).

At this time of grace, it gives me great joy to welcome you as protagonist in the process of the Fifth National Encounter (V Encuentro), under its theme **Missionary Disciples: Witnesses to God's Love**.

The V Encounter is an initiative of the Bishops of the United States calling all Catholic leaders to an intense missionary activity, consultation, leadership development, and identification of best ministerial practices in the spirit of the New Evangelization. It especially prepares us as a Church to better recognize, embrace, and promote the many gifts and talents that the diverse Catholic community shares in the life and mission of the Church, and in the society.

The V Encounter process will gather hundreds of missionary disciples just like you, in Encounters at the parish, diocesan, and regional levels; and your voice will be heard at the national Encounter. As bishop of the Diocese of Joliet, I am eager to hear the ideas and recommendations that will emerge from the process. I am ready to support your leadership in the life and mission of the Church, particularly that of emerging young leaders. Throughout the process of the V Encounter, many Catholics like you will go forth to encounter other brothers and sisters, in parishes, lay ecclesial movements and Catholic organizations. This missionary action seeks to give witness to the Kingdom of love, truth and justice that Christ asks us to proclaim, particularly among young people and families living at the peripheries of the Church and society.

Today you will be given the official manual, the instrument guide designed to help us live out the missionary process of the V Encuentro. The Guide's five sessions are inspired by the call of Pope Francis to be missionary disciples, to be the Church in mission. As such, the sessions and missionary actions prepare us to take the first step, leading us to accompany others, give abundant fruit, and celebrate the joyful presence of the Risen Jesus Christ in our families, our faith communities and on the peripheries.

I invite you to go forth and begin your journey as a joyful missionary disciple, giving witness to the tenderness and nearness God's love. I am grateful for your willingness to accept Christ's invitation to an encounter.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Daniel Conlon".

Most Reverend R. Daniel Conlon  
Bishop of Joliet